

September 23, 2009

Dear Co-Workers:

As we move into the fall flu season, one issue of concern for our City is the prospect of a challenging flu season, with anticipated increases nationwide in the number of H1N1 flu cases reported and the associated increase in absenteeism in the workplace.

The H1N1 pandemic flu is now widespread throughout the world. Fortunately, the vast majority of cases continue to be mild and, at this point, the H1N1 virus appears no more virulent or severe than the regular seasonal flu.

The H1N1 strain does seem to occur more frequently in children and young adults because those who are younger have not yet had contact with a similar type of virus and therefore lack immunity.

***What is “seasonal flu” and how is it different than “H1N1 flu”?***

Seasonal and H1N1 flu are both members of the influenza class of viruses.

Seasonal flu is a group of viruses established in the human population that change (mutate) year to year and causes human illness mostly in the winter months. Because these viruses change, it is necessary to receive a seasonal flu vaccination every year.

H1N1 flu is an influenza virus that has changed from an animal origin to a virus that now infects humans. It contains genetic information that most humans have never been exposed to; so, this creates the potential for an illness that spreads more rapidly and could cause worse symptoms than seasonal flu.

The influenza vaccine for this year’s seasonal flu does not provide protection against the H1N1 virus.

***Where can I get a seasonal flu vaccination?***

- 1) Contact your health care provider to obtain the flu vaccination. You will pay the office co-pay.
- 2) Sansum Medical Clinic is conducting various flu shot clinics. They are requesting a \$20 donation.  
<http://www.sansumclinic.org/site.asp?s=7&id=47CB249140FE46509B82CC012530DBE8&paralid=2C70716C5A0C42A9A7C4BCF80D9A9143>
- 3) The City has purchased 300 flu shots for our yearly Flu Shot Clinic. We expect the delivery date to be in mid-October; more information to follow in future emails.

### ***When will the H1N1 flu vaccine be available?***

The City will not be providing H1N1 flu shots; however, specific plans about community distribution and provision of the H1N1 vaccine will be provided when this information is available.

The CDC and the public health agencies have indicated that certain groups will be eligible to receive the H1N1 vaccine before most of the general population.

These groups include:

- children ages 6 months to 24 years,
- pregnant women,
- healthcare workers,
- people who live with and care for children 6 months old and younger, and
- individuals with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity; ages 25 to 64 years.

### ***How do I take care of myself if I think I have the flu, either seasonal or H1N1?***

Everyone should take steps to stop the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses by:

- **Wash your hands often and thoroughly** or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- **Minimizing contact with others.** Can you conduct your meeting via a conference call vs. a face-to-face meeting?
- **Do not shake hands**, especially when you are ill
- **Cough or sneeze into your elbow** or a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues.
- **Use a disinfectant cleaner** to wipe down surfaces, such as doorknobs, faucet handles, light switches, and counter-tops.
- **Stay home** until you are free of symptoms for 24 hours to avoid spreading illnesses to others.
- **Stay healthy** by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water, and getting adequate rest and exercise.

### ***Is H1N1 flu more dangerous than seasonal flu?***

The H1N1 virus does not appear to be more severe than seasonal influenza. While it is still early in the study of H1N1 flu, it does appear that certain groups of people, as noted, earlier, are more likely to become ill. Individuals with underlying medical conditions, such as chronic medical conditions, pregnancy, and obesity, should be particularly cautious with seasonal flu or H1N1 flu.

### ***Flu Symptoms:***

If you have been in contact with someone who has the flu, the onset of the virus can take up to three days. If you experience any flu symptoms within this time period, please stay home to limit spread of the virus.

Symptoms:

- Fever, *plus* one or more of the following:
  - Cough
  - Body aches
  - Headaches
  - Sore throat
  - Chills and fatigue
  - In some cases, vomiting and diarrhea

If you or your children become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek immediate **emergency medical care**:

**In children**, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held.
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

**In adults**, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

### ***Information Sources:***

**The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department** has established a telephone line with information on the status of the H1N1 flu outbreak. The public can call 1-888-722-6358 for updated information in both English and Spanish. Their website is: <http://www.sbcfluinfo.org>.

**The Centers for Disease Control** website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/>

**Aetna** website: [www.Aetna.com](http://www.Aetna.com).

**California Department of Public Health:**

Toll free hotline for information about the H1N1 influenza: 1-888-865-0564.

The City reminds you that whenever you are ill with a potentially contagious ailment it is in the best interest of all involved to stay away from the office and take care of yourself. This is more important during this period and in particular if flu-like symptoms are evident.

If you are ill, you need to follow your department's procedures re: notification of your supervisor, on-going communication, and return to work.

Take care of yourselves and your families.

Joan